

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a pearl based on expanded polymer and having a continuous skin, the process comprising the following successive steps:

a) extruding an expandable composition comprising a thermoplastic polymer and an expanding agent, in molten state, to effect expansion thereof, and
b) cooling using a liquid and chopping the expanded material thus obtained,
wherein the step of cooling and chopping is performed at the die outlet and
wherein the prepared pearl is a spherical article with its largest dimension being less
than or equal to 15mm.

16. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a gas that can disperse or dissolve in the polymer melt.

17. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a pore-forming agent.

18. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a volatile compound that can dissolve in the polymer melt.

19. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a chemical compound that can react chemically with the polymer by heating, to generate a gas.

20. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the polymer comprises a polyamide.

21. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises a nucleating agent and/or a surfactant and/or a plasticizer.

22. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises reinforcing fillers.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a diameter of less than or equal to 10 mm.

25. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.8 g/cm³.

26-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 22, said reinforcing fillers comprise glass fibers, matting agents, pigments, dyes, heat or light stabilizers, bioactive agents, anti-soiling agents and/or anti-static agents.

30. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, said liquid comprising water.

31. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 24, said diameter being less than or equal to 5 mm.

32. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.5 g/cm³.

33. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.3 g/cm³.

34-37. (Cancelled)